

Budding playwright honors U.S. troops

Charlotte Bryan, a teacher at Poplar Springs Elementary School, submitted this play written by one of her students — Mary Tomlinson. "Prior to Veterans Day 2004, Mary wrote this script entitled 'Military Heroes.' She assigned parts to her classmates and they even brought props for the 'set.' A colleague was impressed when she observed the group practicing in the hall and invited them to share with her class," Charlotte wrote.

"I realize this is a different format than you usually print, but please feature this little drama written by an imaginative 9-year-old with a real sense of the sacrifices of American soldiers and their families."

"Military Heroes,"
by Mary Tomlinson

(The action opens as two children watch American warriors in Iraq.)

Liz: They sure are heroes, Dan.
Dan: Are not, Liz! They're not rich and famous like the Beatles!
Liz: I know. They're protecting us, the whole country actually. They are different kinds of heroes.
Dan: Liz, I never thought of that. Dad is in the military. Will he go to war?
Liz: Maybe, I don't know. It's so dangerous! You could be killed!
Dan: I think they're more important than the Beatles! How can we help, Liz?
Liz: We could make posters, ribbons, anything really, and put "support our troops." Well, maybe.
Dan: That's my sister! Liz, you're brilliant!
Liz: I guess so. Let's get started!

(They hear a knock. Liz opens the door. Dad enters.)

Liz: Hi, Daddy!
Dan: Hi, Daddy!
Dad: Hi, Lizzie! Hey, Danny! I'd like to speak to your Mommy. Is she home?
Liz: Yes, sir, I'll get her.

(Liz exits.)

Dan: Dad, are you going to the war?
Dad: In fact, that's what I am going to tell Mother, that I must leave tomorrow.

(Mother and Liz come in.)

Dan: He's going to war, Liz. Dad!
Liz: He's brave! Let's give him a ribbon!
Dan: Bye Dad!
Liz: We'll miss you! Here's a ribbon! You're a different kind of hero!

(Liz gives him a ribbon.)

Dad: Thank-you! I'll miss you, too. I love you.

(Dad exits to go to work.)

Mom: That was nice.

(Mom exits.)

Liz: We did a good deed, Dan!
Dan: I know, Liz. Dad's a good man and hero. Good night!

(A week later. Liz, Dan and Mom are at home.)

Liz: How do you think Dad is, Dan?

(The phone rings. Instantly, Mom picks it up.)

Mom: Oh! Children your father is hurt!



SUBMITTED PHOTO

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

Mary Tomlinson, 9, and her father, Maj. Kerry Tomlinson — who is on a two-year mobilization with the U.S. Army Reserve at Camp Shelby as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Dan: Did he come back to Denver, his home here?
Liz: May we visit Dad?
Mom: Of course, my dears! Izan Penolin, your father, won't go to Iraq again!

(They go to the hospital.)

Nurse: Who are you here to see?
Mom: Izan Penolin, please.
Nurse: Room 109, floor 5, to your left.
Mom: Thank you! This way, children.

(They come to Room 109.)

Liz: May we go in?
Mom: Yes!

(They open the door.)

Dan: Hello, Daddy! You're a hero!
Dad: Thank you. Hi Lizzie! How are you, Jan Penolin?
Mom: Fine. Children, let me and your father talk, alone.

(The children leave.)

Dad: Jan, take care of our kids. I'll have a choice to go back to Iraq. I will, Jan.
Mom: No! You're not going! You won't! I'll take care of the children, but you won't go to Iraq! You're going to stay in our house and rest, Izan!
Dad: I'm going back! They need me! My foot is down, Jan!

(Liz and Dan enter.)

Liz: You're going back, Dad. We were listening.
Mom: Yes dear. Say goodbye to your father. Be careful, Izan.
Liz: Hey Dad! Good luck!
Dan: Luck from me, too! Bye Dad!

(The next day.)

Mom: Your father is at war again.
Liz: He's a hero, Mom.

(A year later.)

Dan: Liz, Mom, Dad's home!

(They all run outside.)

Mom: We missed you, Izan! You're home forever! At last!
Liz: You're a hero! A different kind of hero!
Dad, Mom, Dan, let's be a family again!
All: The end!

SPEAK UP

Here's how these Meridian residents answered the question, "Do you think Americans have gone back to the same attitude they had before the attacks on Sept. 11?"

Kimberly Davis: "No, because I think people are alert because of what happened." Kimberly, 14, attends Southeast Lauderdale High School.

Stacey McMullen: "Not completely, but they are more relaxed than they were a week or two after the attacks." Stacey, 19, attends Meridian Community College.

Rick Davis: "No. The government will not allow people to return to previous ways because of all of the added security." Rick, 42, is a senior master sergeant with the Mississippi Air National Guard's 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian.

Ed Sheely: "No, I think what happened is still on everyone's mind, so they are more alert." Ed, 64, lives in Meridian and is a retired U.S. government employee.

Laura Davis: "I believe that government officials and schools are still aware, but I think the general population is becoming more relaxed the further we get away from the event." Laura, 40, lives in Meridian and works at Rush Foundation Hospital.

Rhonda Cason: "I think sometimes they do, but they are more patriotic now than before." Rhonda, 37, is a senior master sergeant with the Mississippi Air National Guard's 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian.

Jason Brookins: "I think people are more patriotic." Jason, 36, is a captain with the Mississippi Air National Guard's 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian.

Brittany Jo Davis compiled this *Speak Up* question. She is a sophomore at Southeast Lauderdale High School. She enjoys playing softball and soccer, swimming and attending Bethany Baptist Church. She wants to attend college and study to be a teacher.



Davis

Praying for your safe return

Pat Smith is a member of the Enterprise Woman's Club in Clarke County. Here's a letter she wrote in January to active-duty military personnel, Guardsmen and Reservists serving overseas.

Hi everybody!

Hope all of you had a wonderful holiday season! Somehow I don't think your "rockets" red glare" was quite the same as our fireworks.

All of us back home want all of you to know how much we appreciate your protecting our homeland and we wish each of you a safe return.

I still don't know exactly what my feelings are regarding the war — some days I feel it is very necessary and other days, when I see a funeral for one of our military, I am not so sure. Someday I hope to meet someone who can explain it to

me in a way that I can better understand. Until that time, I will continue to pray for all of you and our leaders.

Things are pretty much the same here in Enterprise and Meridian. The weather was pretty cold during Christmas week but has returned to a balmy 70 degrees. I was hoping we would keep a little wintry weather just to see how it feels to be cold.

The "powers that be" in Meridian are still arguing back and forth about most everything, they are trying to add more taxes, and (wonder of wonders) a convention center is being discussed.

Enterprise School has gotten a lot of good publicity lately — the cheerleaders have gone to New York and London for special parades, the school is a Level 5, and all of the sports teams are excelling.

Will close for now with a Happy New Year and a prayer for your safe return. Take care and don't get discouraged — you have so many people on

your side, praying for you, and wishing you well. You are true heroes to all of us here at home.

Pat Smith, Enterprise